

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 NEA-10 IO-10 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02

SS-15 L-03 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 /075 W

----- 093418

R 281844Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9858

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 13672

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, FT, FR

SUBJECT: FUTURE FRENCH PRESENCE IN TFAI

REF: (A) ADDIS ABABA 6030 (NOTAL); (B) ADDIS ABABA

6193

1. SUMMARY: FRANCE INTENDS TO REMAIN IN THE TFAI AS LONG AS IT IS WELCOME BUT WILL LEAVE WHEN THE LOCAL POPULATION SO DESIRES, ACCORDING TO A QUAI OFFICIAL. AMONG THE CONSIDERATIONS INCLUDED IN THE CURRENT FRENCH REAPPRAISAL OF THE PROBLEM ARE THE POSSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S CONVERSION TO AN INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM, THE NECESSITY FOR SOMALI ACQUIESCENCE IN ANY REAL SOLUTION, ETHIOPIA'S INSTABILITY AND INTEREST IN THE PORT, AFRICAN AND ARAB PRESSURES TO DECOLONIZE, TFAI'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE, AND PARIS PRESS CRITICISM OF THE ANACHRONISTIC FRENCH PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE FRENCH WILL DECIDE TO WITHDRAW BEFORE A CAREFUL STUDY OF ALL FACTORS INVOLVED BUT THEY ARE EXAMINING THE SITUATION WITH A HEIGHTENED CONCERN FOR THE TIME FACTOR. END SUMMARY.

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2. IN THE WAKE OF SECRETARY OF STATE FOR OVERSEAS TERRITORIES STIRN'S APRIL VISIT TO DJIBOUTI, THE RECENT PARIS SOJOURNS OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND PRO-INDEPENDENCE DELEGATIONS FROM THE TFAI AND THIS WEEK'S PRESS REPORTS OF FIGHTING IN DJIBOUTI, WE ASKED QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA COMBAL ON MAY 27 FOR COMMENT ON THE FRENCH FUTURE IN THE TERRITORY. COMBAL, WHO HAD JUST FINISHED A LONG CONVERSATION WITH A DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS TERRITORIES OFFICIAL CHARGED WITH TFAI AFFAIRS, BEGAN BY ASSERTING THAT THE PRESENT MALAISE AND DISTURBANCES IN DJIBOUTI ARE NOT DANGEROUS AND THAT THE FRENCH HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF SOMALI SUBVERSION THERE. HE THOUGHT THERE WAS NO CURRENT LIKELIHOOD OF A SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN THE SECURITY SITUATION.

3. ABOUT THE FUTURE, COMBAL SAID FRENCH POLICY, AS OPPOSED TO ITS IMPLEMENTATION, IS EASY TO DESCRIBE. FRANCE WILL FOLLOW THE WILL OF THE POPULATION AS EXPRESSED LEGALLY THROUGH ELECTIONS AND DECISIONS BY LOCAL OFFICIALS. IF THE SITUATION CHANGES INTERNALLY AND THE INHABITANTS WANT INDEPENDENCE, THEN THE FRENCH WILL NOT OBJECT.

4. WHAT THIS POLICY WILL MEAN IN PRACTICE, COMBAL CONTINUED, IS LESS EASY TO OUTLINE. HE NOTED THAT ALI AREF WAS IN THE BEGINNING A FRENCH PAWN. HOWEVER, WITH TIME AND SUCH CHANGES AS LAST YEAR'S DECISION TO TURN CONTROL OF LOCAL SECURITY FORCES OVER TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ALI AREF IS BEGINNING TO BE SOMEBODY WITH WHOM TO RECKON. IN HIS TALKS WITH GISCARD AND STIRN, COMBAL SAID, ALI AREF WAS MANEUVERING TO LEAD THE TFAI TO INDEPENDENCE UNDER FRENCH GUARANTEE. THERE IS ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY THAT UNDER PRESSURE FROM HIS POLITICAL ENEMIES, SUCH AS THE DELEGATION RECENTLY RECEIVED BY STIRN IN PARIS, HE MIGHT INTRODUCE A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR INDEPENDENCE INTO THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY WHERE HE CONTROLS THE VOTE. COMBAL THOUGHT THINGS ARE NOT YET AT THE POINT WHERE SUCH A RESOLUTION IS LIKELY.

5. COMMENTING ON SOMALI CLAIMS, COMBAL SAID THAT THERE

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CAN BE NO REAL SOLUTION IN THE TFAI WITHOUT SOMALIA'S ACQUIESCENCE. ALI AREF HAD NOT BEEN HAPPY WITH LAST YEAR'S IMPROVEMENT IN FRANCO-SOMALI RELATIONS AND TOOK QUIET SATISFACTION IN THE RENEWED TENSION CREATED BY THE KIDNAPPING OF AMBASSADOR GUEURY. COMBAL NOTED THAT THE FRENCH ARE DRAGGING THEIR FEET ON THE REQUEST FOR AGREEMENT OF A NEW SOMALI CONSUL GENERAL IN DJIBOUTI.

6. AS FOR ETHIOPIA, COMBAL MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE EMPIRE'S HAVING A POTENTIAL EFFECT ON ETHIOPIAN CLAIMS TO DJIBOUTI BUT DISMISSED THIS AS "HIGHLY UNLIKELY." HE THOUGHT, RATHER, THAT THE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 13672

PMAC WOULD CONTINUE TO ASSERT ETHIOPIA'S INTEREST IN THE PORT ALTHOUGH THE FRENCH UNDERSTAND THAT THERE HAVE RECENTLY BEEN DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIANS AND SOMALIS CONCERNING TERRITORIAL PROBLEMS IN THE HORN. IF THE ETHIOPIANS WERE EVER WILLING TO CEDE LAND IN THE OGADEN TO SOMALIA IN RETURN FOR RIGHTS IN DJIBOUTI, WHICH COMBAL STRONGLY DOUBTED, HE THOUGHT THE SOMALIS WOULD NEVER RENOUNCE THEIR CLAIMS TO ALL TERRITORY INHABITED BY THEIR ETHNIC BRETHREN.

7. ALLUDING TO OTHER ELEMENTS AFFECTING THE SITUATION, COMBAL CONSIDERED THAT AFRICAN PRESSURES IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE WOULD NOT BE STRONG ENOUGH TO CAUSE FRANCE TO CHANGE ITS POLICY. WITHIN FRANCE, HE CONTINUED, THE

MILITARY WILL REMAIN A STRONG VOICE FOR RETENTION OF  
DJIBOUTI FOR STRATEGIC REASONS BUT MIGHT GRUDGINGLY  
ACCEPT EVENTUAL BASE RIGHTS IN AN INDEPENDENT TFAI.  
FINALLY, COMBAL ACKNOWLEDGED THE GROWING FRENCH PRESS  
CRITICISM OF FRANCE'S ADMITTEDLY ANACHRONISTIC  
PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI BUT AGAIN, DID NOT ANTICIPATE THAT  
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THIS WOULD BECOME A REAL PROBLEM IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

8. COMMENT: FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR MANY DISCUSSIONS  
OF THE TFAI, COMBAL EMPHASIZED THE NON-ETERNAL NATURE OF  
THE FRENCH PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT  
EVENTS, INCLUDING INCREASED IF STILL EASILY BEARABLE  
SOMALI, AFRICAN AND ARAB CRITICISM OF FRANCE FOR REMAIN-  
ING IN THE TFAI, HAVE LED THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO A  
QUIET REAPPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION. WE HAVE SEEN NO  
SIGN THAT A POLICY CHANGE HAS YET BEEN MADE, HOWEVER.  
WE BELIEVE THAT THE FRENCH WOULD NOT DECIDE TO WITHDRAW  
BEFORE A CAREFUL EXAMINATION OF ALL THE FACTORS  
INVOLVED, INCLUDING THE VIEWS OF FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS  
HAVING INTERESTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. NONETHELESS,  
SUCH CONSIDERATIONS AS FRANCE'S PREOCCUPATION WITH ITS  
IMAGE IN THE THIRD WORLD OR ALI AREF'S SUDDEN CONVERSION  
TO AN INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM, MIGHT ACCELERATE THE  
RETHINKING PROCESS.  
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## Message Attributes

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